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United for Quality Care

February 23, 2022
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Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Robin David, I live in Naugatuck, and I have been a PCA for 20 years. I like working with people, and I've learned so much from my consumers over the years. Caring for individuals with autism or alzheimer's disease has taught me so much more than I could ever learn from a book. Over my two decades as a caregiver, I've cared for total care patients with quadriplegia; dementia patients experiencing sundowners; and I've even cared a Holocaust survivor. I currently care for 3 consumers, but I'm forced to cap my hours at around 25 per week so I can maintain my Husky eligibility.

Limiting my hours means we're struggling for the basics: we've been faced with the danger of eviction twice in the past year, and my car is currently on a repossession list. We currently don't have enough money to buy groceries and pay our monthly utilities, and we are forced to rely on food banks like United Way and Unitec for food and rental assistance.

We also don't have any paid sick days. I have severe osteoarthritis, which periodically debilitates me to the point that I can't do my job. Because we have no paid sick days, I've probably taken between 10 and 20 days off unpaid over the last 6 months alone; I've worked many more in pain because I couldn't get coverage. There have been times I've gone to work when I could barely walk or stand. What good are we to our consumers if we can't even care for ourselves?

I'm agitated and upset about our homecare system that has left us as workers high and dry, while we have provided nothing less than the best of care for our consumers. Without an adequate wage of \$20.00 an hour and healthcare insurance my family and I are going to end up being evicted and homeless on the streets. And my husband's life-threatening medical condition could leave me without a husband and my children without a father. That's a scary day to day possibility, but one for us that is very real.

Last week I was proud to take arrest with 20 others to win a better future for myself and my fellow PCAs. Please hear us and put forward the funding needed for us to get health insurance, paid sick days, and a livable wage. All we're asking is to be able to work to live, instead of just live to work. Thank you for listening.

